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An Artist Historian

An Essay

BY

WILLIAM JACKSON ARMSTRONG

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

CHARLES B. GALBREATH

State Librarian of Ohio

President, National Association of State Librarians

COLUMBUS, OHIO

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INTRODUCTION.

By CHARLES B. GALBREATH,

*State Librarian of Ohio; President of the National
Association of State Librarians.*

IN an age of "many books" the general reader finds it convenient, and in a measure necessary, to depend upon the critique or book review as a guide to the literature that, according to his standard, will be found worth reading. Especially is this true in regard to history and its related branches, geography, travel, and biography. One desires first to know, before reading a voluminous work, that it has a substantial basis in fact, that it exhibits, on the whole, a consistent fidelity to truth, that it is not shaped by policy, or distorted by fear, or marred by narrowness, or warped by prejudice. Fortunate is he if he does not have to unlearn, not only what he "learns amiss," but what others have learned amiss. In this department of

literature many books have been written for the sole purpose of correcting error.

As suggested in the following pages, it is often only through a long perspective that we get the true measure of men and events. After the flight of twenty-five centuries, history does justice to "the divine Sappho," the calumny of the Greek comedians falls before impartial investigation, and the Lesbian queen of letters stands forth as queen of her kind in that far-off day when the world was young. In the light of modern research, Constantine is diminished, Charlemagne is exalted, and even the domestic virtues of Mohammed are recognized. Coming down to the Colonial period of our own history, we behold in Nathaniel Bacon, the leader of rebellion in the Old Dominion, the patriot and martyr. It is only in the closing days of the century that we are learning to survey dispassionately our own Revolution, and to acknowledge to its full extent the debt of gratitude we owe France

for the aid that made success possible in that unequal struggle. Writers and the reading public are generally rising to a genuine appreciation of impartial history. This is as it should be. Why should the muse withhold her reward through the centuries? She will not do so if her votaries are diligent to seek and bold to speak the truth.

Next to the essential of authenticity is literary style. Judged by either standard, the works of Doctor John Lord must be accorded a high rank. In the following pages full justice is done them in the discriminating essay by William Jackson Armstrong. Without his knowledge, and at the request of his publisher alone, it is my privilege to write this Introduction. Mr. Armstrong is qualified in many ways to write such a review. He was for years personally acquainted with Doctor Lord, and has critically read almost everything that the eminent historian has written. A man of culture and a platform orator him-

self, his reading and studies have taken a wide range. A number of printed lectures, magazine articles, and poems, bear testimony to the fact that he is a literary artist of no mean ability. For years a newspaper correspondent at the national capital, and afterward, under the Administration of President Grant, Inspector of United States Consulates for Europe, his opportunities have been exceptional for that comprehensive survey of the world's history that he praises in Dr. Lord. It is to be hoped that this literary venture, which ranks well with the essays it generously and justly commends, may meet with such a reception as to encourage its somewhat diffident author to further effort in a field where his studies and observation have fitted him to speak "as one having authority."

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "A. B. Galbraith". The signature is written in dark ink and features a large, looping initial "A" and a long, sweeping underline that extends across the rest of the name.

AN ARTIST HISTORIAN.

BY WILLIAM JACKSON ARMSTRONG.

IT is not yet five years since the death of Doctor John Lord, a man peculiar in physical attributes, insignificant in person, awkward in bearing, and a stammerer in speech, yet informed with an intelligence and aspiration so lofty that he died leaving behind him accomplishment equaled by that of but few Americans.

For the last forty years of his life Dr. Lord made his home at the village of Stamford, Connecticut, from which point he passed out on his unceasing lecture tours, addressing tens of thou-

From *The Methodist Review*, New York, November, 1899.

sands of his countrymen, making his figure and his literary work familiar throughout the length and breadth of the land. He was nearly equally well known in England. Attention to his work, temporarily diverted for a brief interval succeeding his death, through the absence of his unique personality, is beginning to be recalled in full measure by the solidity and worth as well as by the brilliancy of his literary remains. His works, published in completed form and showing the man in his real intellectual proportions, are now being sought for by thousands of readers on both sides of the Atlantic. The fact is gratifying to the lovers of elevating literature everywhere.

Next to the poet and essayist, who deal with elemental ideas and human emotions, may be ranked as literary benefactors the artist historians, the writers who, like Thucydides and Tacit-

tus and Hume and Gibbon and Macaulay, present the facts of the past in such attractive robes of speech that their narratives remain lasting possessions to our kind. Though the interval which has elapsed since his death and the appearance of the full body of his works has not been sufficient to give his achievement the benefit of this permanent perspective, there can hardly be a doubt that Dr. Lord is destined to take high rank even among these greater gods of his literary class. And this will appear true whether he is judged by the volume of his contribution to historical writing or by the riches of thought and the quality of the diction in which he has embalmed his work. In this latter regard of a luminous and fascinating literary style, he is certainly exceeded by no American writer of history, whether it be Prescott, or Parkman, or Irving himself—or even our latest lumi-

nary, John Fiske; and if Bancroft and Motley may be considered to take precedence of him by virtue of sustained efforts, covering whole periods of national history, the admirers of Dr. Lord may fairly claim that, in the surpassing range of his historical studies, he has an advantage of even these acknowledged masters. In this respect, indeed, of extended investigation and variety of themes, Dr. Lord stands alone, without a peer or competitor in the entire list of historical essayists. It is safe to believe, in fact, that with the exceptions only of Macaulay and the late Spanish Castelar, no other modern literary student has looked so familiarly as he over the long perspective of the world's events.

Dr. Lord's early discipline for his life-work as a literary man was of the loose and desultory sort which is the frequent antecedent of the career of genius. It

is the instinct of winged talent to soar to its purpose even after many falls from attempted flight. Such was the experience of the young historian in his school and college years. Born in the old town of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in the year 1810, he received his first rudiments of education under the severe and somewhat repugnant methods of the old-fashioned private school of that gloomy half Calvinistic period of New England history. He confesses in the partially written account of his own life that his school days were not happy, and that, being addicted to shirking his tasks, he rarely escaped one whipping a day, and sometimes got two, until his hand became "as hard as a sailor's." His experiences at home were hardly more exhilarating, under the tutelage of his pious Calvinistic mother, who, he records, brought up her children in the old-fashioned orthodox way

to "attend meeting three times on Sunday besides going to Sunday-school," and, as that day "was supposed to begin on Saturday at sundown, no books could be read until Monday except such works as Baxter's 'Saint's Rest,' Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress,' Taylor's 'Holy Living,' with the 'Boston Recorder' for lighter reading."

Removing with his parents in his tenth year to the little town of Berwick, in the neighborhood of Portsmouth, young Lord continued his studies in the village academy under instructors who were described by him as having "pedantry without learning;" and "vigor without discipline," until, at the end of six years, he left the institution, as he acknowledges, without having made any acquisitions except a repugnance to the study of Latin and Greek and a knowledge of mythology obtained from Lemprière's Dictionary.

A year or two later, in 1829, he was sent by his parents to Dartmouth College, the great northern seat of New England learning, presided over, at that time, by his distinguished uncle, Nathan Lord, erudite in his generation, but who has been pictured as, after the manner of college presidents of the period, a "disciplinarian rather than a teacher," and as a "rigid Calvinist who accepted all the deductions to which that system logically led." Calvinism, indeed, appears to have been the creed under whose shadow and influence the future historian was destined to begin and end his intellectual novitiate. And never did a somber theological mantle fall upon a more joyous and magnanimous spirit than in the case of this artist-chronicler of the world's events; for, while accepting, to the last, in theology, like his distinguished uncle and instructor, the postulates and deductions of a

rigid and time-worn theology, Doctor Lord, as the mature essayist and philosopher, treated all systems of faith and the followers of all creeds with a charity and tolerance as catholic as the needs of historical judgment. And only perhaps in the direction of impatience of rationalistic criticism, impairing the authority of Revelation itself, did his peculiar theology narrow him. But who will venture to deny that, as a professed believer in that Revelation upon whose integrity the whole body of historical theology must stand, or through whose even partial discredit it must fall, he was rigidly consistent? It is surely not the swarm of modern doctors of theology, who weakly consent to the compromise of rationalism with faith, that can assume the rôle of his critics here.

Four years at Dartmouth and three years additional spent at Andover Theo-

logical Seminary, whither he repaired at the end of his literary course to prepare himself for the ministry, which he had chosen as his vocation, completed young Lord's formal education for entrance into the world. But even these years, to his lasting regret, as he confesses in his autobiography, were not devoted to the steady discipline of academic training. They had been broken with frequent and alternating episodes of school-teaching and experimental and vagrant lecture-tours; while, with the waywardness and indolence of his perverse genius in these younger years, he had, during the intervening period in college, systematically shirked all uncongenial studies and occupied himself in the college libraries with omnivorous reading, especially along the line of history and historical criticism, which, in spite of his predilection toward theology as a profession, seemed

from the beginning to be his native bent. But who shall dictate the discipline or the method through which that extraordinary intellectual endowment which we call *genius* shall arrive at its triumphant end?

Emerging from the Andover Divinity School with the credentials of his chosen calling in his possession, in spite of his "ignorance of Hebrew," young Lord, for the period of three years, experimented with his career, partly as a traveling agent and lecturer of the American Peace Society, and partly in trying to establish himself in the profession of the ministry. The experiment in both directions was attended with harassing and often comical vicissitudes. Success was qualified with too frequent disappointments to make his selected vocation satisfactory. The cast of his talents was distinctly moral and didactic, but the career of a theological

teacher along conventional lines was evidently not in accord with the fundamental bent of his intellect. In his school years, neglecting whatever other studies, he had persistently cultivated rhetoric and the arts of expression. His instincts were literary and for historical investigation. It was his genius, his destiny. Fully conscious of this at last, he "decided about this period," says his formal biographer, "to adopt the profession of historical lecturer as his life-work."

Writing retrospectively of this resolution in later years, he says: "I felt that in some important respects thus far I was a failure and never could do anything or be anything so long as I pursued an uncongenial calling for which I was not fitted. I then took the advice of some of my Andover friends and resolved to labor in some other way where duty and pleasure ran in the same

line. I did not turn my back on the ministry. For forty years afterwards, I preached wherever I was invited. I continued to revere a calling for which I was not adapted. I have always sought the society and friendship of ministers as the most learned, most useful, most sympathetic and most interesting class in the community. I resolved not to enter a strictly secular life, but to work in harmony with the profession in which I had been educated. As a lecturer on history I could bring to bear all my knowledge in defense of the truths of the Christian faith which I had never rejected nor even doubted. I thought I could be more useful to the church by advocating great fundamental truths in the lecture-room than in the pulpit; that I would thus be more free, untrammelled and bold, inasmuch as history covers everything—religious dogmas as well as science, politics, and art.”

From the time of taking this resolution, about the year 1840, his career was fixed. And never was a career more steadily and consistently followed; and rarely has one been extended through so long a range of brilliant usefulness to our kind. During a period of more than half a century succeeding the adoption of his new work, Doctor Lord was not only a teacher of history, but a luminous expositor of its profoundest lessons, as they were examined and portrayed by him under the searchlight of a keen philosophy and a stringent moral purpose. With the exception of the time spent in his library in the necessary preparation of his materials and his occasional visits to Europe to further the same end—to make his work solid and accurate—his life, during this entire period, covering more than a generation, was spent on the lecture-platform. In all the great cities of our

continent, as well as in many of those of Great Britain, and in hundreds of our institutions of learning, larger and smaller, over the breadth of the land, he became in his yearly tours the recognized apostle and oracle of his great themes. For, to hear him speak was, for young and old, to catch his own fire and to receive lasting impressions and inspiration in connection with the characters and scenes of history which his eloquence pictured. And it is worthy of note that with Doctor Lord eloquence was a paradox of almost all its formal rules ; for, producing at times upon his audiences the effects of the great masters of oratory, it was itself produced through a physical human instrument apparently the most inadequate and hopeless that ever essayed the difficult art of the platform. Under the teachings of a lecturer whose person was diminutive, whose gestures were erratic

movements of the arms ignoring all co-ordination with his thought, and who read his notes in a frayed, unmusical voice interrupted with a periodic thoracic sneeze, audiences sat spell-bound. It was the genius, the intensity of the orator himself, the intellectual face, the luminous, humorous yet earnest eyes, the power of concentrated feeling, surmounting all the conventional formulas of attractive speech, and carrying the inspiration of his message straight to the brains and hearts of his listeners.

It was not until the closing years of his life, which ended in December 1894, that Doctor Lord desisted from this half a century strain of platform oratory and retired to his always delightful Stamford home, to embody in permanent and finished literary form the results of his life-work. When this was accomplished he had still a remaining year or two of enjoyable existence, passed with his

family and in agreeable correspondence with his appreciative publishers, who had been from the beginning his admiring and devoted friends. Then, characteristically of the lofty spirit and philosophy which had always sustained him, he serenely, almost cheerfully, turned his face toward what to him was the sunrise of real existence. It was the tranquil close of a rounded life in character and accomplishment.

Besides his one notable work, to which longer attention will be called, Doctor Lord's publications were his "Modern History," "Ancient States and Empires," "History of the United States," "The Old Roman World," and one or two text-books of history for schools and colleges. These all have their specific value and place in our current historical literature, but they are subordinate in importance, as they were in a sense preparatory to the one great

achievement, his "Beacon Lights of History," the publication gathering into its compass the substantial fruits of his life, and destined, as it was by him designed, to be his literary monument. Of this splendid work it will be of interest to speak succinctly.

"Beacon Lights" was the felicitous ascriptive phrase chosen by Doctor Lord when he came to the task of giving final embodiment to his entire series of historical lectures as they had been delivered in his half-century of platform experience. This task when finished filled the ten volumes of "Beacon Lights" as they now appear, with about five hundred pages each of large and attractive print; the respective volumes containing distinct and characteristic groups of twelve lectures of the series whose themes, dating from the earliest annals of our race and ending with events of the current time, make the

completed work of one hundred and twelve lectures a panoramic retrospect of human history. In these essays every period of the world's past is regarded and epitomized, its own salient feature, or philosophy, being in turn made luminous ; so that, from the standpoint of the reader, history becomes, as in some wondrous transformation scene, a perspective of gleaming points lost to view only in the remote gloom of primitive ages ; the title of the volume being thus vindicated. In this phase the " Beacon Lights " series is unique, since, as has been already intimated, no other essayist, remote or recent, has attempted at once so wide a survey or so complete an analysis of the spirit of historic epochs.

There is still another feature peculiar to these volumes and commending them to the acceptance of the reader. Each epoch is delineated under the name of



DR. JOHN LORD AT 45 YEARS.

its foremost character, or representative; as for example, "Life in the Fourteenth Century" is pictured in an essay on "Geoffrey Chaucer"; the period of "Maritime Discoveries," under the heading "Christopher Columbus"; "Unsuccessful Reforms," under "Savonarola"; and the "Revival of Art," under "Michael Angelo." The fascinating quality of personal narrative is thus lent from first to last to what, in fact, are almost unequalled treatises on the philosophy of history. As has been said not inaptly: "The charm of Doctor Lord's writing is that, while the reader *unconsciously* takes distinct impression of the growths and changes of great eras, his attention is *consciously* fixed by the stirring recitals, the character-painting, the innumerable personal touches—the foibles, the failings, as well as the grand qualities—of illustrious men and women."

It is this biographical method of treating history, of grouping the events of a period under the shadow of the name representative of its distinctive tendency, or philosophy, that has drawn unusual attention to Doctor Lord's literary accomplishment. In the use of this method he has enjoyed the distinction of being among American writers the pioneer; and, combined with the exquisite pictorial art with which he has set forth his themes, it is the method which has secured the author's just fame. It is only necessary to note the contents of a single volume of these master studies to indicate the nearly phenomenal range over which the author's vision swept and his genius illumined in their preparation. The initial volume of the series, for instance, bearing the general title, "Jewish Heroes and Prophets," includes the treatment of the following themes: "Abraham,

the Father of Religious Faith"; "Joseph, Israel in Egyptian Bondage"; "Moses, the Social and Moral Law"; "Samuel, the Judges and Prophets"; "David, Israelitish Conquests"; "Solomon, the Glory of the Monarchy"; "Elijah, the Division of the Kingdom"; "Isaiah, National Degeneracy"; "Jeremiah, the Fall of Jerusalem"; "Esther and Mordecai, Hebrew Statesmen Abroad"; "The Maccabees, the Heroic Age of Judaism"; "Saint Paul, the Spread of Christianity."

Succeeding this is the volume on "Pagan Antiquity," containing essays on Cyrus, Socrates, Phidias, Julius Cæsar, Cicero, Marcus Aurelius, Constantine, Chrysostom, Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine, and other representative characters of the ancient world, made to stand for such phases of the general subject as "Asiatic Supremacy," "Greek Philosophy," "Greek Art,"

“Imperialism,” “Roman Literature,” *et cetera*.

And let it be noted that every one of these more than one hundred essays is a masterly treatise or, more than that, a profound and comprehensive study of its subject, made from an exhaustive investigation of its literature,—an investigation which would have enabled the author to write volumes instead of a single essay on the theme. Doctor Lord tells us that in the preparation of a single lecture he not infrequently read and consulted as many as three hundred books. This being the quality and measure of his work, two or, at most, three such volumes as have been described might of themselves well be considered a respectable contribution to our literature from a single brain. But the “Beacon Lights” series, with its almost boundless motive and scope, proceeds through its nearly six thousand

pages to unfold its panoramic riches; the eight volumes succeeding those just mentioned presenting, under their appropriate titles, from Mohammed and Charlemagne to Hildebrand and Wyclif, the mighty figures of the "Middle Ages"; from Dante and Angelo to Calvin and Galileo, the poets, the theologians and discoverers of the "Renaissance and the Reformation"; from Cleopatra to George Eliot, the "Great Women" of history; from Richelieu and Cromwell to Mirabeau and Napoleon and Webster, the modern orators, warriors, and masters of diplomacy; and, under the titles of "Modern European Statesmen," "American Statesmen," and "Nineteenth Century Writers," the whole galaxy of great names in statesmanship, diplomacy, and letters, from Chateaubriand, Metternich, Washington, and Franklin to Cavour, Bismarck, Clay, Lincoln, Sir Walter Scott, Byron, and

Macaulay. These ten volumes are, in truth, what they have been eloquently described to be : " An epitome of human achievement in religion, government, philosophy, science, art, architecture, society, reforms, politics, war, education, and literature—the whole forming a philosophically connected view of the world's life and progress for five thousand years, marking the currents that have directed the movements of races, swayed empires, shown the force of ideas, and controlled the destinies of mankind."

Professor C. B. Galbreath, the eloquent State Librarian for Ohio, has aptly said : " No one enjoys the opportunity to read the best literature of his time who has not access to 'Lord's Beacon Lights of History.' " It is, however, the suggestiveness of these volumes equally with their treasures of historic information which constitutes

their signal value to students and literary readers,—through opening vast and varied perspectives of human action and thus offering new fields to the imagination.

As a literary artist, Doctor Lord has not taken the exalted rank which he is unquestionably destined to occupy ; although a constantly growing number of the most critical English and American scholars is being added to the list of his advocates—becoming, indeed, his enthusiastic admirers. Among these former was the eminent historian, the late Professor James Anthony Froude, while, on this side of the Atlantic, educators as distinguished as the diplomatist, Andrew D. White, formerly of Cornell, and President Francis I. Patton of Princeton, are foremost among those paying tribute to his literary talent ; indorsing in substance the verdict of their professional associate,

Professor Mowry, of the Salem (Mass.) public schools, who, in characterizing the work of the author of "*Beacon Lights*," ventures the superlative eulogy that "no mortal man ever threw such learning, such wide reading, such graphic delineation into his discourse on a historical theme." "His lectures," he adds, "are a series of paintings."

It is possible that Doctor Lord's life-occupation as an itinerant lecturer, breeding the accustomed "contempt" of "familiarity," may have temporarily retarded his recognition as one of the greatest lights of his literary class. However this may be, it is apparent that ample amends are about to be offered for this somewhat belated appreciation. As with the critics and scholars, an increasingly large section of our most intelligent reading public is now turning towards his works—and with an increasing approval and admiration. The

cause is not far to seek. Doctor Lord had within himself all the elements which make literary work endure—the complete equipment of the literary workman, the mental and spiritual machinery that impresses the classic stamp. He had scope, philosophy, and imagination. To these he added industry, tireless and relentless. He had the artistic sense in its highest perfection. He writes history like Plutarch: his character-studies are portraits. Of these it has been pertinently said that, “being the study of real heroes, they yield all the delights of fiction while imparting real information”; as it has again been affirmed of these delineations by a distinguished American jurist and diplomat, “the writer clothes the bones of history with flesh and blood, and moulds its lessons with human form, color, and expression.”

Sometimes the author of “Beacon

Lights" completes the summary of an epoch or a hero with an epigram or a single flashing phrase, as when, comparing the Feudal period with our own times, he distinguishes that the "Middle Ages recognized the majesty of God, the nineteenth century the majesty of Man"; and again, he avers of Cardinal Richelieu that he was "cunning as a fox, brave as a lion, supple as a dog, all things to all men—an Alcibiades, a Jesuit." These piquant touches he employs sparingly, however, as no writer steers wider than he of the merely loud and sensational in composition. On the contrary, the very purity and symmetry of his diction may produce with the undiscriminating the effect of symmetry in natural objects—that of diminishing the grandeur of real proportions. No error could be greater than one in this direction with reference to the vigor of his expression. He is a writer of first-class

power and intensity. It is simply true that he combines with force a grace and facility not elsewhere exceeded. From the point of view of literary manner alone, such essays as those of the "Beacon Lights" series rise to the dignity of true art-works as really as do any corresponding papers by Froude or Carlyle or Macaulay; there being only this discrimination, that the method of the American writer is wholly without affectation—which to many will appear the finer art of literary treatment, in that it leaves the mind of the reader entirely with the objective theme under examination.

Placing his work page by page by the side of even such picturesque art-studies as those of John Ruskin, esteemed a quarter of a century ago the exemplar in English composition, the craft of the American does not suffer by the comparison, while it enjoys the advantage of

being applied to the illustration of verities which do not fade when considered apart from their literary treatment.

Such is the quality of Doctor Lord's work, the "art that conceals art"—illustrating also the open secret that the rare and final achievement in every art is nature's own simplicity. He tells you his story with the directness and fervor with which he might recite it in animated conversation sitting with you through a summer evening on his hospitable veranda. But there is always economy of statement—always reserved power and imaginative intensity, the perfection of true artistic composition. The discrimination of a character or an era of which Macaulay would make an epigram and Carlyle a series of interjections, he places before you in direct vivid phrase. Of Carlyle himself, for instance, he says: "This hyperborean literary giant, speaking a Babylonian dialect,

smiting mercilessly all pretenders and quacks, and even honest fools, was himself personally a bundle of contradictions, fierce and sad by turns. He was a compound of Diogenes, Jeremiah, and Doctor Johnson; like the Grecian cynic in his contempt and scorn, like the Jewish prophet in his melancholy lamentations, like the English moralist in his grim humor and overbearing dogmatism." No more comprehensive or graphic delineation has been presented of the dyspeptic Scotch essayist.

Again, characterizing Bonaparte, he says: "His egotism was almost superhuman, his selfishness most unscrupulous, his ambition absolutely boundless. He claimed a monopoly in perfidy and lying; he had no idea of moral responsibility. He had no sympathy with misfortune, no conscience, no fear of God. He was cold, hard, ironical, and scornful. He was insolent in his treat-

ment of women, brusque in his manners, severe on all who thwarted or opposed him. He committed great crimes in his ascent to supreme dominion, and mocked the reason, the conscience, and the rights of mankind."

To Doctor Lord's style has been applied the epithet "luminous." The ascription is defective in its failure to convey the full conception of its true quality of light. His diction is a limpid stream of simple eloquent speech running in the broad sunlight itself, and flashing to the reader's mind every tint and hue of the mental region through which it is directed. Whether he discourses upon the lofty mission and supernal visions of the Hebrew Judges and Prophets, the scholastic philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, the conquests of Charlemagne, or the stimulating social diversions of the salon of Madame de Récamier, you are with him at every

turn and instant of the proceeding, absorbed, eager, and, at times, entranced. No quip of fanciful or oblique speech, no trick of posing on the part of the author, for a moment diverts consciousness from the central point of attention. Everything is direct, forward, intense, powerful. It is only at the end that the reader realizes the refinement of the art by which he has been captivated.

Any account of Doctor John Lord which failed to note his surpassing qualifications for his vocation as a critical historian would be curiously deficient. His aptitude for his calling was partly a gift and partly an acquisition. He had the historical instinct, or genius, paramount. But to this he added labor. Beginning his career with a little special training in theology and a refreshing absence of solid or accurate information along every other line of investigation, (except history), through the necessity

of becoming himself a teacher of his fellows he gradually extended his acquirements until his command of the whole range of knowledge which concerns the history of human commonwealths was little less than amazing. As he reviews the rise and progress of states, intricate questions are dissected and touched upon by him with the firm hand of the specialist in each department—questions of the constitutions of governments, diplomacy, finance, revenues, tariffs, coinage, and the subtlest problems of political economy. No writer, indeed, has surpassed him in this catholic mastery of the components of history. The land regulations and the distribution of wealth under the Cæsars, the legal codes of Justinian and Constantine, the devices for revenue by the English sovereigns, the financial expedients of Law and Talleyrand and Neckar, the tariff provisions of Henry Clay, and

the National Banking scheme made notorious by the enmity of Jackson, are all described and passed upon by this divinity student turned historian, as familiarly as he pictures the policy of the mighty papal Hildebrand or the spiritual conceptions of Saint Ambrose and Chrysostom.

That, however, which is even more remarked by the student of Lord is the element which has been called the "historical imagination,"—that element which is the creation at once of aptitude and of learning. In these days of rapid book-making, when knowledge is too frequently the result of cramming, when the complex data of history are swiftly overhauled and historical characters recast in a night, to meet the demands for a short-cut process to information, even reputable essayists are content to make brief special studies of single historic periods or characters and to lay

the result of their hasty investigation, dressed in more or less meretricious rhetoric, before the public. Not such were the conception and methods of the author of "Beacon Lights of History." Doctor Lord's knowledge of history is fundamental. Each separate essay from his pen rests upon, as it is illumined by, a familiarity with the entire story of the world's past, whose events appear as the common furniture of his mind, and whose literature, for convenient illustration, is at his instant command. His survey of the historic domain is as with a far-flashing search-light from a hilltop ; or it may be said that his study of the past has been so comprehensive, so detailed, so elaborate, that its events lie before him as in a bird's-eye view on a single shining field of vision—every period related to its antecedents and successors, every incident and character with their abounding analogies through the ages.

By such immense conceptions of his mission, by such tireless studies, is the imagination of the historian formed. And it is safe, and not extravagant, to say that no expositor of the past has equaled Doctor Lord in this quality of comprehension.

His perception of resemblances, his groupings of characters and incidents, separated from each other by the remotest periods and the most diverse environments in time, form for the reader a constant succession of startling and agreeable surprises, while throwing abundant light on the subjects under examination. Thus, while reviewing the story of the Hebrew Mordecai and Esther, his mind turns toward Richelieu and Madame de Maintenon in modern France; the horrors of St. Bartholomew suggest their parallels in those inflicted in the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and of Magdeburg by Tilly; the char-

acter of Catharine de Medicis recalls the savage Fredegunda and even Mary of Scotland; Cæsar, the Roman patrician, like the French aristocrat, Mirabeau, appeals to the masses against his own order; Cato in his narrow-mindedness and conservatism finds his analogue in the modern Wellington; the Roman Constantine is described to be as politic as the French Henry IV., and Sully, the minister of Henry, as faithful a servitor to his prince as was Burleigh to Elizabeth; the wise Aristotle is the forerunner of the modern many-sided Humboldt; the peculant Verres arraigned by Cicero is the fitting historic companion-piece of the spoliator, Hastings, under the invective of Burke; the names of Charlemagne and Peter the Great of Russia are linked together in their labors to establish an empire, while the Jewish David is associated with Washington and Alfred the Great; the sage Con-

fucius is joined in comparison with Solomon ; and St. Augustine, in giving shape to the new doctrines of the Church, is likened as a benefactor to Alexander Hamilton who fixed the principles and financial policy of the great Republic ; Cicero is observed to have won his legal reputation in the defense of Roscius, and Daniel Webster in the Dartmouth College case ; the learned and spiritual Arius of the early Church is described to be as reproachless in character as our modern Parker or Channing ; and the name of Oliver Cromwell is associated with that of Abraham Lincoln in respect of the solemnity of his burdens and his enjoyment of a joke.

These and hundreds of similar parallels glow like gems on the pages of Doctor Lord's works, casting their searching side-lights into every corner and crevice of history.

But it is not as a specialist, or chronicler of the mere details of the past, that the author of "Beacon Lights" is in his prime. He is essentially and above all an expounder of the *meaning* of the world's transactions, the artist philosopher, who projects the X-ray of his analysis through the very body of historic epochs and detects the pith and core of their significance. Read his essay on the "Feudal System" and the identical structure of the Middle Ages rises before you—the causes and origin, the central thought and purpose of those somber, suppressed centuries made clear as the noontide of a modern era. Read his "Saint Bernard," and the beginnings and philosophy of that vast and complex scheme of monasticism, which for centuries covered human society, are pictured and realized as distinctly as the character-casts in a modern novel.

As an expounder of the philosophy of history, indeed, the author of "Beacon Lights" must be given a high place among the select few who have attempted the difficult rôle of interpreters of the past. His investigations do not assume the formal pretensions of the essays of Guizot or the German Hegel, though possessing the merit of equal profundity, while his conclusions are placed before the reader with a directness and lucidity to which those more famous continental expositors can lay but slight claim.

But stepping out of the past, Doctor Lord has met and recognized the problems of his own time. He has anticipated the anarchies and despotism of an age of concentrated wealth—the threatened impoverishment and enslavement of men under the reign of the billionaire: and he boldly challenges the fallibility of that political economy

under which such a consummation of human history is made possible.

These great and just praises having been accorded, it remains to be admitted that there is an aspect in which Doctor Lord's claims as an historical critic are to be received with a more qualified approbation. The reference is to his peculiar theological bias. It is the single limitation of his great endowment as a philosophical reviewer of the world's past—the fly in the amber of his literary reputation, judged from literature's standpoint. Abandoning the profession of the ministry for the pursuits of the historical essayist, he did not sufficiently gain his own consent to abdicate the functions of the theologian, and is tempted at times to apply the rules of dogma to phenomena, impatient of their measurement. Amid the splendors of dissertation on the most momentous events there falls at inter-

vals on his pages the shadow of a too narrow theological creed. He wavers for an instant before according full praise to Thomas Jefferson, because Jefferson, as he confesses, had largely imbibed his sentiments of liberty from the study of Voltaire and the sneering deist, Rousseau. While picturing with intense colors the darkness and degeneracy of the Middle Ages, he is still moved to idealize that hopeless epoch by reason of its being an age of *faith*, as against the more materialistic even if more humane character of modern centuries; forgetting that neither the hardness of the Feudal times nor the humanity of the present can be justly attributed to the greater or less amount of religious belief in the two periods. Influenced by the same mental antecedents, he inclines to rehabilitate the Biblical David after the murder of Uriah, while holding Napoleon to the

full measure of responsibility for the assassination of D'Enghien; ignoring the identical quality of their respective crimes against humanity.

It is clearly the case of the old-school Calvinistic New England Andover of his student days holding at the end of half a century the rein over her gifted son as he appeals to his modern auditors. Recognizing the essential sanity and liberality of his nature, it is easy to credit that fifty years' delay in the date of his birth, or the difference of a degree of latitude in the locality of his theological training, might have contributed to Doctor Lord's literary fame.

But strangely enough, the fault, or defect, here pointed out has in no material sense affected the solidity of his conclusions as a historian. It is perceived rather as a tendency, or moral bias, which his reason combats, than as a flaw warping the integrity of his final





DR. JOHN LORD AT 75 YEARS.

judgments. It is a subjective rather than an objective entity,—a cast of thought which may qualify, for a time only, the estimate of his work at the severe bar of literary tribunals, but which cannot conceal from that wider republic of intelligence to which he appeals his splendid contribution to historical criticism and knowledge. Everywhere on his pages there is evidence of the noblest qualities of heart and brain—tolerance, breadth, candor, and just discrimination.

But as the expounder of history it is in ethical quality that Doctor Lord is supreme. It is here that he is seen to tower into a region where he is easily among the foremost interpreters of the past. He is, in a word, the ethical historian *par excellence*. It was, indeed, with this purpose, as he confesses, of applying the moral touchstone to the widest possible compass of facts, of

drawing lessons from the entire field of human experience, and of becoming an ethical teacher in the broadest sense that he obtained his own consent to abandon the profession of the ministry. His inherited instincts from his New England ancestry, as well as his theological training—which, if in those yet early times it prescribed abnormal rigidities of creed, still inculcated the imposing sanctities of moral obligation—left him no other choice than that of being a moral instructor. And loyally did he pursue his mission. Every problem of history became to him a problem of righteousness. In this aspect and quality his writings possess their especial and pre-eminent value. Against the tendency of every epoch, against every confused and puzzling transaction of history, whether of states or individuals, he presses the ethical question until he has forced from it the

lesson of Right. Whether he analyzes the conduct of Cæsar in the overthrow of the Republic, the motives of Cromwell in becoming the dictator of the Commonwealth, the zeal of Becket in defending ecclesiastical prerogative, or the morality of Frederick and Napoleon in their wars against states, the inquiry pursued is still for the fundamental good of humanity. And when the inquiry is ended, the answer is rendered, not in the rhetoric of the casuist, not in the distorted phrasings and megalophonous sophistications of Carlyle, confusing power with right and success with justice, but in tones clear and certain as the strokes of an evening bell, and appealing to the common sense and conscience of mankind.

Writing of Cromwell and the execution of Charles, he says: "Cromwell was at the bottom of the affair as much as John Calvin was responsible for the

burning of Servetus. There never has a great crime or blunder been committed on this earth which bigoted, or narrow, or zealous partisans have not attempted to justify. Bigoted Catholics have justified the slaughter of St. Bartholomew. Partisans have no law but expediency. All jesuits—political, religious, and social, in the Catholic and Protestant churches alike—seem to think that the end justifies the means, even in the most beneficial reforms; and when pushed to the wall by the logic of opponents will fall back on the examples of the Old Testament. In defense of lying and cheating they will quote Abraham at the court of Pharaoh. There is no insult to human understanding more flagrant than the doctrine that we may do evil that good may come.”

Writing of the Conquest of Silesia and the aggressions of Frederick the

Great, he says : " So far as a life devoted to the military and political aggrandizement of a country makes a man a patriot, Frederick the Great will receive the plaudits of those men who worship success, and who forget the enormity of unscrupulous crimes in the outward glory which immediately resulted,—yea, possibly of contemplative statesmen who see in the rise of a new power an instrument of the Almighty for some inscrutable end. To me his character and deeds have no fascination any more than the fortunate career of our modern millionaires would have to one who took no interest in finance. It was doubtless grateful to the dying king of Prussia to hear the plaudits of his idolaters, as he stood on the hither shore of eternity ; but his view of the spectators as they lined those shores must have been soon lost sight of and their cheering and triumphant voices

unheard and disregarded, as the bark in which he sailed alone put forth in the unknown ocean to meet the Eternal Judge of the living and the dead."

Once more, referring to the partition of Poland, in which Frederick participated, he writes: "Might does not make right by the eternal decrees of God Almighty written in the Bible and on the consciences of mankind. Politicians whose prime law is expediency may justify such acts as public robbery, for they are political jesuits--always were, always will be: and even calm statesmen, looking on the overruling event, may palliate; but to enlightened Christians there is only one law: 'Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you.' Nor can Christian civilization reach an exalted plane until it is in harmony with the eternal laws of God."

Of the great minds illuminating

France in the era succeeding the Revolution, he says: "These kings and queens of society represented not material interests,—not commerce, not manufactures, not stocks, not capital, not railways, not trade, not industrial exhibitions, not armies and navies, but ideas, those invisible agencies which shake thrones and make revolutions and lift the soul above that which is transient to that which is permanent,—to religion, to philosophy, to art, to poetry, to the glories of home, to the certitudes of friendship, to the benedictions of Heaven."

These and hundreds of other similar reflections profusely current in every volume of Doctor Lord's writings mark the standard of a morality such as has been rarely applied to the measurements of history,—a morality which is that of neither the casuist nor the ascetic, but which is as lofty as it is clear, and

which is fit for the instruction and inspiration of all ages. In an epoch like the present, sorely tempted by the glitter of material riches and power, it is the quality which pre-eminently commends his work to the rising generation of students, and which forms the priceless jewel in the crown of his fame. To such translators of the past the debt of intelligent gratitude is an ever-filling cup, since, neither dazzled by power nor warped in reason by the conventions of mankind, they are our beneficent instructors, keeping their vision clear and single to that eternal law of Right which we name justice, that sleeps not nor changes through the changing centuries, but keeps its righteous and loyal reckoning with the institutions and deeds of men.





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